

NEW ZEALAND'S

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2025

# meeting newz

● The Meeting, Incentive, Conference & Events Magazine

Auckland  
Hawke's Bay  
PCOA  
Brisbane



Connecting the business events industry for over 30 years

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### Note from the publishers...



Tourism has been back in the political spotlight with yet another new tourism minister (the fifth in as many years) appointed, and the announcement of relaxed visa requirements allowing tourists to work remotely while here on holiday.

These latest developments came as the Prime Minister stressed his economic growth strategy, stating “tourism has a massive role to play in our growth story” during his new year state of the nation speech.

However, central government’s talk seems rather counter-intuitive to the funding cuts and subsequent job losses being experienced by regional bureaux around the country.

Selling high value tourism is a long game built on relationships which take years to develop – business events are a case in point. Yet business events sales and marketing roles are among those being lost, endangering the all-important relationships that go with them.

Meanwhile, New Zealand’s business events practitioners remain laser-focused on securing and delivering world-class conferences, incentives and other events. There are more

positive vibes for 2025 than in recent years, and this was evident at the successful Business Events Expo in November.

The expo gave industry folk the opportunity to meet face to face with clients – something that will always be critical for businesses to thrive.

In another show of confidence, New Zealand is taking the largest contingent yet to AIME in mid-February to showcase the broad range of experiences available for business events.

Speaking of celebrating success. At the BEIA annual conference in November in Auckland, strategically aligning dates with the Business Events Expo, the business events industry will celebrate the exceptional contributions of individuals and organisations at the inaugural New Zealand Business Events Industry Awards. Further details will be provided soon.

As always, we keep you informed and connected with the latest industry news, events, social scene and people on the move. In this edition of Meeting Newz we feature Auckland and Hawke’s Bay, and pop across the Tasman to hear what Brisbane has to offer.

You can also read about the latest happenings from our key partners BEIA, NZEA and PCOA.

Put the coffee on and enjoy the read!

*Best wishes, Paul, Terry and Gary*



## Meeting Newz Magazine features 2025/2026

### March April 2025

- Taranaki & New Plymouth
- Australia - AIME 25 Review, Melbourne
- Incentive travel & events
- Venues with a difference
- PACIFIC BUSINESS EVENTS MAGAZINE

### May June 2025

- Northland & Whangarei
- Queenstown & Southern Lakes
- Australia
- MEETINGS 2025 MAGAZINE

### July August 2025

- Central Otago
- Dunedin
- Northland & Whangarei
- Waikato & Hamilton

### September October 2025

- Southland & Invercargill
- Wellington & Wairarapa
- West Coast
- Australia
- PCOA Preview

### November December 2025

- Rotorua, Tauranga & BOP
- Taupō
- Whanganui
- Australia - AIME 2026 Preview
- The Business Events Expo

### January February 2026

- Christchurch & Canterbury
- Marlborough
- Nelson/Tasman
- PCOA 25 Review
- Business Events Expo Review

Features subject to change

For any enquiries regarding the upcoming features please contact

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**Paul:** paul@meetingnewz.co.nz



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## NZ presence biggest yet at AIME 2025

New Zealand will showcase what makes it special – from its Māori culture to Middle-earth – at this year’s Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) in Melbourne from 10–12 February.

The Tourism New Zealand 100% Pure New Zealand stand will host its largest ever contingent at AIME 2025, with 36 different New Zealand business events organisations and operators exhibiting.

Auckland’s New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) will serve up a taste of the highly anticipated new venue at the hosted buyers’ lunch on Day 1, with a special New Zealand menu curated by NZICC executive chef Rob Cullen.

Hobbiton Movie Set will bring a little piece of Middle-earth to AIME for the first time, with a full-scale Hobbit Hole, complete with real grass and gardens. Created in the Hobbiton workshops, the interior will display the craftsmanship that has gone into creating the new Bagshot Row interior Hobbit Holes.

Tourism New Zealand is also sponsoring a session in this year’s AIME Knowledge Program – Change the world through tourism will see Nadine ToeToe, director of Kohutapu Lodge & Tribal Tours explore how indigenous tourism can be a catalyst for positive change in an era where tourism can either uplift or exploit communities.

Tourism New Zealand global manager business events, Penelope Ryan says: “We’re delighted to be showcasing such a broad range of activations at AIME that highlight the variety of experiences available in New Zealand for business events. From authentic engagement with

Māori culture to magical, once-in-a-lifetime, activities, and world-class convention centres, New Zealand can deliver it all.

“We encourage event organisers to stop by stand F1 for kōrero and kai (a chat and a snack) to discuss what’s possible in New Zealand.”

Present at the stand alongside Tourism New Zealand will be destinations Auckland Convention Bureau, Business Events Wellington, ChristchurchNZ Business Events, Hamilton & Waikato Tourism, RotoruaNZ Business Events, Destination Marlborough, Destination Queenstown, as well as flagship airline Air New Zealand, and industry association BEIA (Business Events Industry Aotearoa).

Venue representatives at the show will cover the New Zealand International Convention Centre in Auckland; Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre; Tākina Events; Auckland Conventions, Venues & Events; Venues Ōtautahi and Venues Wellington.

Accommodation providers include Cordis Auckland, EVT Hotels & Resorts, IHG Hotels & Resorts, Millennium Hotels and Resorts, Pullman Auckland Hotel & Apartments, Rendezvous Hotel Heritage Queenstown, Scenic Hotel Group, Sofitel Auckland Viaduct Harbour and Sofitel Wellington, and Sudima Hotels.

Experiences come from AJ Hackett Bungy New Zealand, Alpine Luxury Tours & Incentives, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Hobbiton Movie Set, KJet, Ngāi Tahu Tourism, Oxbow Adventure Co, PPG Events, Realnz, NW Group and Urban Gourmet.



## BEIA conference in Taranaki

Business events professionals from across New Zealand and Australia met for two days in Taranaki late last year for the BEIA conference.

The focus for the conference was on the future, driving growth and seeking opportunities for New Zealand to stand out in an increasingly competitive environment.

“We will be looking ahead to the next decade with the Business Events National Strategic Direction 2035 - Pīata Mai, which sets out steps for measuring and growing the sector’s positive cultural, social, environmental and economic impact for the next 10 years.” says Lisa Hopkins BEIA, chief executive.

Leading event organisers, together with industry partners Tourism New Zealand and Air New Zealand joined the forum to give domestic and international customer perspectives on opportunities for widening industry collaboration and growth.

Discussions included legacy and impact, diversity and cultural integration. Building recognition for the value of business events was a key topic, with media experts joining the forum.

Many new faces attended the conference and they had a chance to meet and create new connections over the two days, which also included a conference dinner at the iconic Bowl of Brooklands. You can see more photos in the social scene on page 30.

The **BUSINESS EVENTS** expo  
2025  
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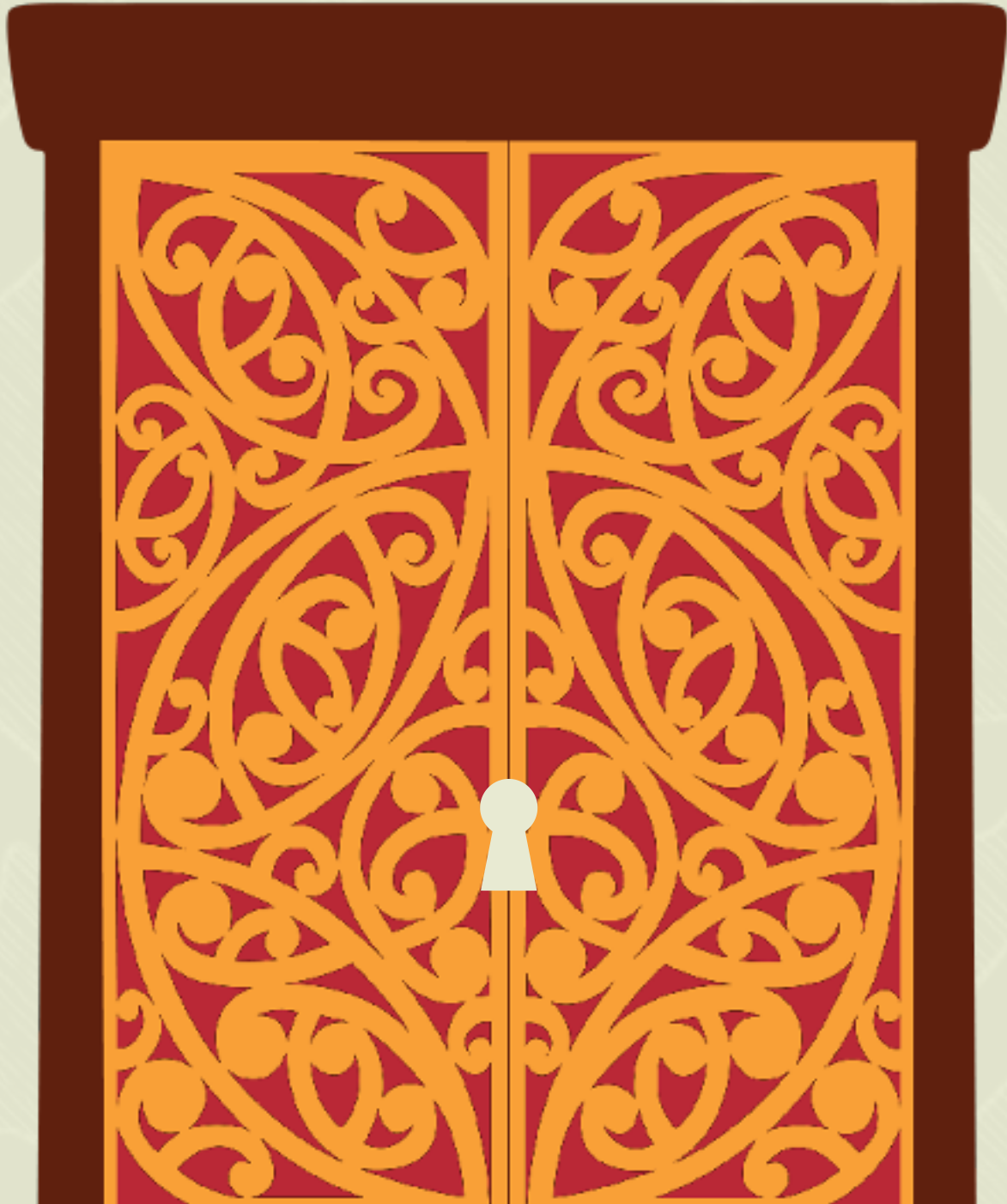
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## New chair for BEIA Approved PCO Group



Rachel Cook

Rachel Cook has been appointed chair of the Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) Approved Professional Conference Organisers (PCO) Group.

She is the business director of Conference Innovators (CI) and since joining CI 20 years ago has been instrumental in the company's continuing growth and success. Cook plays a pivotal role in building and supporting the CI team, fostering a collaborative and innovative culture that underpins the delivery of high-quality events.

"It is a privilege to step into the role of chair for the BEIA PCO group, representing a network of professionals who uphold the highest standards in the conference and event management industry. This group is a cornerstone of our sector, ensuring that every

conference, event or meeting is managed with excellence, reliability and trust," she says.

"We extend heartfelt thanks to our previous chair, Arna Wahl-Davies for her valued contribution over the past four and a half years."

BEIA chief executive, Lisa Hopkins says the 16 companies accredited to the BEIA Approved PCO Group are qualified to handle the most complex of domestic and international association conferences.

"Not only are BEIA Approved PCOs required to meet strict criteria on an annual basis, they are bound by a Code of Ethics, Rules and Responsibilities determined by BEIA," Hopkins says.

Cook says the value of working with a BEIA Approved PCO is about ensuring events are delivered to the highest standards and executed professionally, securely and ethically.

"For clients, suppliers and stakeholders alike, working with a BEIA Approved PCO gives peace of mind and the assurance of a high-quality experience," she says.

"As chair, my focus is on building value for the members of the BEIA PCO group and strengthening collaboration within our network.

"In an industry that continues to evolve, the role of a PCO is more vital than ever. I look forward to working with this incredible group to ensure BEIA Approved PCOs continue to thrive and deliver exceptional value for clients and stakeholders alike."

## Melbourne secures Women Deliver 2026



Melbourne has won the bid to host Women Deliver 2026 on behalf of Oceania Pacific, marking the first time this influential conference will be held in the region.

The successful bid was spearheaded by the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) in collaboration with the Victorian State Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, with support from the Federal Government, Tourism Australia's Business

Events Bid Fund Program and Oceanic Pacific stakeholders.

Taking place between 27 and 30 April at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, the landmark event will see more than 6,500 delegates from across 170 countries converge to provide a robust civic space dedicated to advancing gender equality and the health and rights of women and girls.

As one of the largest and most significant global conferences on gender equality and women's rights, Women Deliver 2026 presents an unparalleled opportunity to advance the global movement for gender justice and reproductive health, creating space for critical dialogue, knowledge sharing and networking. The triennial conference serves as a catalyst for change, uniting leaders, advocates and organisations to drive meaningful progress on the issues that matter most to girls, women, and gender diverse people.

## Cairns to host Amway Korea incentive 2025

Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) has secured an estimated \$11.68 million for the Cairns regional economy.

TTNQ chief executive officer Mark Olsen announced that Amway Korea would bring around 2700 delegates to Cairns in 2025 arriving from across the Asia-Pacific region in six waves from 17 November to 9 December.

"This event is an incentive rewarding Amway's top performers with each wave of delegates doing three full days of touring and at least two off-site events as well as opportunities to explore Cairns at leisure," he says.

"International incentive groups are the highest-yielding market in tourism with an average spend of \$1000 per delegate per day compared to \$735 for other international business events.

"As well as spending more, incentive delegates tend to stay longer, and we are confident many will extend their stay with their family to explore the Great Barrier Reef and the world's oldest rainforest.

"The timing of the event is particularly good for Tropical North Queensland as it comes in one of the quieter periods of the year and will be a welcome boost ahead of the festive season," he says.

## Cordis Auckland wins

Cordis, Auckland was crowned New Zealand Hotel of the Year at the HM Awards for Hotel and Accommodation Excellence in Sydney late last year.

The HM Awards celebrate the crème de la crème of the hospitality industry across the Asia-Pacific region.

The HM Awards' judging panel commended Cordis, Auckland for its seamless blend of luxury and comfort, alongside its forward-thinking approach to hospitality.

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# Christchurch to host PCOA 2025

Ōtautahi Christchurch will host the next Professional Conference Organisers' Association (PCOA) conference in December 2025.

The PCOA Conference is heading to New Zealand for only the second time in its history, with over 400 leading conference and event organisers from Australia and New Zealand expected to attend.

ChristchurchNZ, Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre and Christchurch Airport collaborated on the bid to bring the event to Christchurch.

Because of the impact PCOs have on driving conferences to destinations, the PCOA Conference creates a significant opportunity for Christchurch to attract future business events to the city and continue to build on its reputation as a leading place for delegates to come together and connect.

ChristchurchNZ chief executive, Ali Adams says Ōtautahi Christchurch is an exciting conference destination and its world class facilities will be a drawcard for delegates to next year's three-day event.

"Christchurch is in the midst of an exciting time in its history. It is a brand-new city, with an eye on the future. It is also home to Aotearoa New Zealand's oldest collection of heritage buildings. The city is enriched with culture, inspired by our tangata whenua (indigenous people). It is a

place full of balance, with space to gather, connect with nature and experience many unique attractions.

"Our business events community is a powerhouse, full of support and expertise, and because of its boutique size, our close-knit industry goes above and beyond for our conference organisers and delegates," she says.

Te Pae Christchurch general manager, Ross Steele says, "We are delighted to be working with ChristchurchNZ and PCOA to showcase our world-class convention centre and share our journey to Toitū net carbonzero.

"Our experienced team look forward to delivering a warm welcome, shining a spotlight on our beautiful city to top conference and event organisers, and to help drive future business for our city," he said.

Barry Neame, PCOA President, says the PCOA is thrilled to announce Christchurch, New Zealand as the destination for PCOA25.

"Returning to New Zealand is always a privilege, and Christchurch's dynamic energy and innovative spirit make it the perfect host city," he says.

"This decision reflects our dedication to celebrating the PCOA's commitment to the growth and success of the business events industry in New Zealand and Australia by providing another platform for professional and skill development of practitioners in our

industry sector.

"Te Pae Christchurch is a world-class facility, with spectacular surroundings, and the promise to deliver an unforgettable experience for attendees, sponsors and exhibitors alike.

"We look forward to collaborating with our Kiwi friends and the Christchurch community to create a conference that will inspire, connect, and strengthen our industry," Neame says.

PCOA25 will be held from 7 to 9 December 2025 at Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre.

## Atura Wellington unveils refurbished rooms

Atura Wellington has unveiled its freshly refurbished rooms.

Since opening in 2021 in the building formerly known as The Thorndon Hotel by Rydges, Atura Wellington has become a destination for travellers staying in the vibrant and historic Thorndon neighbourhood.

With a firm focus on simplicity, the hotel initially completed a full refurbishment of all public spaces as part of a broader redevelopment plan. Following this, all 108 guest rooms have now been upgraded, offering a refreshed, revitalised experience.

The refreshed rooms feature updated carpet, fresh paint in Atura's signature colours, new Dyson fans and premium Sleepyhead beds in every room.

General manager Mason Hannan has overseen the refurbishment. "Atura's focus on convenience and style has been further elevated with these upgrades, adding to the hassle-free, fly-in/fly-out nature of the hotel," he says. "Our new rooms blend comfort and technology for a seamless guest experience. Whether guests are here for business or to explore the coolest capital, Atura provides a base that feels like a home away from home, tucked away in the fantastic suburb of Thorndon."

## AIPC Gold Certification for Te Pae

Te Pae Christchurch has achieved Gold Certification in the AIPC Quality Standards programme, in recognition of the organisation's performance across a range of operational areas. In achieving the gold level, the highest standard in the independently audited programme, Te Pae Christchurch joins a select group of only 30 convention centres worldwide.

The programme covers ten key areas including customer service, quality of facilities and operations, employee relations, health, safety, security and emergency response, financial integrity, community relations, environmental responsibility, industry relations and supplier relations.

Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre general manager, Ross Steele says gaining the AIPC recognition was a great way to end 2024, and a high note for the team that has been working extremely hard across all areas of the operation.

"This really is a reflection of the international standards of service and quality

we've been able to achieve through our experienced, world-class team," says Steele.

"While working through a very busy programme and welcoming more than 80,000 visitors to almost 220 events over the course of the year, we have been able to maintain a consistently high level of performance across all aspects of the business – from employee engagement to sustainability.

"But perhaps the thing we are most proud of is the level of customer feedback we've been getting, with an overwhelmingly positive response to their experiences of Te Pae, and the city."

As well as the latest AIPC rating, last year Te Pae Christchurch also achieved Toitū Net Carbon Zero status – the first convention centre in the world to do so, as well as ISO 9001 for Quality Management and ISO 22000 for Food Safety Management.

Steele says the standards are not only a way to benchmark the organisation against the best in the world but provide the platform for a process of continual improvement.



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AUCKLAND

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# MAKE WAY







Step aside – Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland is making no apologies as it makes its mark as a real powerhouse for business events and conferences on the global destination stage – the city is embracing its size, energy, and ambition like never before.



The city's events offering is set to be bolstered by a wave of new infrastructure, most notably the long-awaited New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC), which will bring new capacity to a conferencing portfolio that already includes proven international venues the Aotea Centre and Viaduct Events Centre.

With the NZICC set to redefine the business events scene, backed by world-class infrastructure, seamless domestic and international connectivity, and a thriving urban culture, Auckland is proving it's more than ready to compete with the best. Big, bold, and brimming with confidence, the City of Sails is stepping out of the shadows and into the spotlight as a premier destination for conferences, conventions and corporate events.

Recent infrastructure developments and upgrades across the city have improved Auckland's capacity to host international conferences. Transport improvements include City Rail coming online in 2026, new electric and hybrid ferries changing the way delegates get across the city, and developments at Auckland Airport expanding the gateway airport for New Zealand.

An influx of accommodation investment has seen hotel capacity in Auckland grow 23% since 2019. There are now 18,000 rooms in the region, with new additions in the city centre including Horizon by SkyCity with direct links to the NZICC; Hotel Indigo, SO/Auckland, Abstract, Soho Hotel Auckland, InterContinental, Hotel Grand Chancellor, Tribe properties, plus Auckland Airport's new Te Arikiniui Pullman.

Ken Pereira, head of Auckland Convention Bureau (ACB), says that while Auckland is already seen as a major international hub for business events, it will be able to leverage more opportunities soon that will enable it to

By Shannon Morris-Williams



compete strongly against other world-class destinations.

He says the recently held forum, *Unleashing the Potential of Business Events*, organised in collaboration with Auckland’s International Business Events Advisory Group (AIBEAG) provided excellent direction around Auckland’s infrastructure.

“The NZICC, the City Rail Link, the airport investing significantly in expanding its footprint – all of these position Auckland well for the future,” he says.

“It enables us to cater for a growing audience within the international business events segment.”

Pereira says one of the most salient points from the forum was the importance of connecting business events to the future prosperity of Auckland.

“This means understanding what Auckland does well and what we want to do well.

“What also came out of the forum was the opportunity to align business events with the economic priorities, technology advances and industry sector developments that Auckland, as a region, is planning for.

“This vision, combined with the significant infrastructure development, will position Auckland for success in the future and provides a pathway to achieve enduring outcomes and legacies for event organisers and our local community.”

**Auckland next ‘big thing’ in events**

NZICC general manager, Prue Daly, says Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland is the next ‘big thing’ in events.

“The NZICC opening and the increase in hotel capacity means Tāmaki Makaurau is more competitive than ever,” she says.

“NZICC will put Aotearoa New Zealand on the global stage for business events. Literally on the doorstep of world-class hotels, entertainment, and hospitality



*Unleashing the Potential of Business Events  
Photo: Tataki Auckland Unlimited*

options, NZICC will challenge the perceptions of a modern convention centre. Its vertical design means no shuttling between venues, and with its urban connection and harbour views attendees will feel truly immersed in Tāmaki Makaurau.”

Due to open in 2025, the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) will be the largest and most versatile conference, exhibition, and entertainment space in New Zealand.

The NZICC is predicted to bring in 33,000 new international visitors a year and contribute \$90 million in economic impact.

Daly says the NZICC is doing well in attracting international business events.

“Our sales teams are strategic in who they are approaching to ensure opportunities align with our priorities as a city, and where we have leaders in sectors with ties to New Zealand.”

Confirmed international events to be held at the NZICC in 2026 include the

International Dairy Federation World Dairy Summit, the International Confederation of Principals Convention, International Coral Reef Symposium and the Federation of Asian and Oceania Pest Managers Associations Conference.

Daly says Australia represents a great opportunity for growth with international visitors.

“With a customer experience focus, we are working alongside our clients to understand what the trends are in their world. This way, we can support them in enhancing the visitor experience, which only continues to grow in importance.

“For example, we are designing our food menus to accommodate growing demand for interactive and immersive experiences. The global emphasis on wellness and inclusivity has seen us design all-inclusive bathrooms, and spaces with special furniture that accommodate our neurodiverse community.”

The NZICC will offer the flexibility of



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NZICC hosts a hard hat tour for the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers council, during their recent visit Auckland.

operable walls, meaning the exhibition hall space on level three will be adaptable to accommodate anything from intimate groups to dinners for more than 3,000 people. The 2,850-capacity theatre can also be divided to create space for events to occur concurrently and without disruption. The retractable seating in this theatre space also allows for flat floor accessibility for dinners or cocktail functions.

As part of its commitment to sustainability, NZICC will pursue several complementary certifications, including the globally recognised EarthCheck Certification; the AIPC (International Association of Convention Centres) Quality Standards which covers key operational areas such as customer service, environmental responsibility and community relations, and includes an external audit for

certification; LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification; and the New Zealand-based Toitū Carbon Reduce Certification, which encourages businesses to measure and reduce their greenhouse gas footprint.

“By pursuing this combination of certifications, we will position ourselves as a leader in sustainable convention centre operations, and contribute to New Zealand's efforts to combat climate change,” says Daly.

**Auckland aligns city priorities through business events**

Auckland is connecting its economic development and convention bureau expertise following a successful forum aimed at supercharging Auckland's business events sector.

The Unleashing the Potential of Business

Events forum, held at Auckland's Aotea Centre late last year, brought together more than 150 domestic and international business events and economic development experts.

Organised by Auckland Convention Bureau, a division of Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, participants shared new research and market insights and collaborated on strategies to boost Auckland's competitive advantage for business events and drive economic growth.

The arrival of the New Zealand International Convention Centre in 2025, plus an increasing portfolio of hotels in the city will create further opportunities.

Feedback from the international advisors was that Auckland and New Zealand are well placed to attract business events in an increasingly competitive conference and incentive market.

*Continued on page 18*



New Zealand International Convention Centre



Auckland Viaduct Events Centre, Viaduct Harbour



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Marion Bausse, Orshi Miklos and Ash Eslamy





Garden Bar at Novotel Ellerslie

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#### Custom Lane at Mövenpick Auckland

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### EVENTS TRENDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

*“The lines between work and play are blurring, and today’s events are all about engagement, energy, and experience – because a great meeting isn’t just about what’s on the agenda, but how it makes people feel.”*

#### Meet & Play at Pullman Auckland –

Say goodbye to stiff conference settings and hello to interactive experiences! Enjoy supersized Jenga, Connect Four, and playful catering with creative twists on childhood favourites. From fun snacks to vibrant meals, every break and meeting becomes a deliciously memorable experience!

#### Fresh Air & BBQ Feasts at Novotel Ellerslie –

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Custom Lane at Mövenpick



Continued from page 14

“Our diversity is a point of difference – we have more than 180 cultures in our region,” says Pereira. “This, combined with our Māori culture, enables Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland to hold its own in the international sphere.”

Challenges, including financial and sustainability issues, are driving the need for more strategic and impactful events. Attendees agreed on the need for more collaboration across public and private institutions to ensure benefits move from incidental to strategic.

Pereira says the events will help accelerate the sector.

“This forum demonstrated the incredible role business events play in supporting Auckland’s growth as a global destination. Through meaningful discussions and insights, we highlighted how business events are a catalyst to attracting diverse sectors, ultimately driving significant and lasting outcomes for our communities.

“In addition to supporting visitor spend in tourism, hospitality and retail, business events not only highlight Auckland’s potential but also reinforces Tātaki Auckland Unlimited’s commitment to leveraging these events as catalysts for sustainable economic and social impact.”

**Sector focus**

Auckland is trying to lead the way to meeting the aspirations of the community through attracting purposeful business events to the city. The outcomes of the recent forum put in motion plans to develop a structured group of stakeholders to drive Auckland’s economic development through business events.

Beyond generating 40% of New Zealand’s GDP, Auckland is also home to three world-class universities offering strong research and



Delegates Dining at Waiheke Island

development opportunities. With strong start up and innovation networks, Auckland is a playground for new ideas and connections.

Strategic conference bidding includes championing key sectors such as advanced technologies, creative industries (including screen and digital content), green economy, infrastructure, food and beverage production, and health sciences to leverage opportunities from business events.

Mark Thomas, director, Committee for Auckland, says: “Events in Auckland are an important part of what contributes to Auckland’s international appeal. The 2024 State of the City international benchmarking report on Auckland highlighted the city’s ranking above its peer cities as a place to experience.

“By strategically aligning business events with Auckland’s strengths as well as its opportunities in infrastructure delivery, skills development and diversity, we can both capitalise on the city’s assets as well as add insights and build awareness which can add

value to those who are or want to work, study, visit or invest in Auckland.

“Hosting events that focus on innovation, sustainability, and cultural enrichment can attract international attention and investment, contributing to Auckland’s prosperity. This approach not only boosts the city’s economy but also enriches our community, aligning with the aspirations outlined in the State of the City report.”

**Auckland Airport**

International passenger numbers through Auckland Airport in December were the highest since 2020.

A total of 1,028,445 international passengers moved through the airport, a 6% increase compared to December 2023. International passengers, excluding transits, in December increased by 7% compared to December 2023, representing a recovery to 93% of the pre-Covid equivalent.

It was the highest recovery rate since the outbreak of the covid pandemic in early



Auckland Museum



Auckland hotel capacity has increased by 23%



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2020, however the 18.7 million passengers in 2024 is down on the 20.9 million total for the year to December 2019.

**MOU with China Southern**

Last year, Auckland Airport, Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, and China Southern Airlines signed a memorandum of understanding that will see the three organisations work together to grow Auckland as a destination for Chinese business travellers, particularly for conferences and meetings, trade exhibitions, and business incentive travel.

Of the 210,000 Chinese visitors entering New Zealand since travel resumed between the two countries, 13,000 – or 6 % – were here for business, conventions or conferences with the Chinese business travel segment recovered to 65% of pre-pandemic volumes.

Auckland Airport chief customer officer, Scott Tasker says the partnership aims to build on Auckland Airport’s daily non-stop connectivity provided by China Southern Airlines to its main hub airport in the southern city of Guangzhou, to grow business travel visitation.

Increased flight connectivity with North America is also opening this market for incentive and conference opportunities. Auckland Airport is now the Australasian airport with the most non-stop connections to the United States and Canada.

“The past year (2024) has been marked by the strong return of international airline capacity with seat availability to international destinations recovered to 91% of 2019 levels,” says Tasker.

“North American routes have been a standout with a 48% increase in available seats not only supporting Kiwi travellers but also a 40% growth in visitors from North America.

“Connectivity with China has been another bright spot. The return of Sichuan



Te Kaahu Restaurant at Te Arikini Pullman, Auckland Airport

Airlines in April brought our network to six airlines serving seven Chinese destinations. Seat capacity on these routes has now surpassed 2019 levels.

Currently, 27 airlines operate non-stop services between Auckland and 42 international destinations, with around 90% of all long-haul travelers to New Zealand arriving at Auckland Airport.

**AUCKLAND NEWS ROUND UP**

**Grand Millennium refurb nears completion**

Grand Millennium's \$30 million refurbishment is nearing completion with the Atrium Bar redevelopment now open.

“The hotel is perfectly positioned to host residential conferences, large events and gala dinners, with the beautifully refurbished Grand Ballroom and 453 accommodation rooms – the most spacious hotel rooms in the city,” says Millennium’s national business development manager, business events, Jana Kingston.

“The hotel is also a stone's throw from

NZICC, providing a great option for those large conventions needing accommodation blocks in the vicinity of the convention centre or additional meeting spaces for satellite events.”

Hotel general manager, James Billing and Kingston will be attending AIME in Melbourne on 11 and 12 February and say they are looking forward to showcasing Grand Millennium to the important business events industry.

**New Auckland hotel for Marsden Group**

Marsden Hotel Group has opened Marsden Suites Albany with 62 fully refurbished rooms, including superior king, superior twin and deluxe studios, plus one and two-bedroom apartments. Each suite is fully self-contained, featuring a kitchenette with dishwasher.

Marsden Suites Albany offers an adaptable meeting space for up to 40 people. The room features a 75" smart TV with HDMI cables and Jabra Panacast for two-way conferencing. Tables and seating can be arranged to suit. The space also features a kitchenette with crockery, urn and water cooler. The property offers ample, free, on-site parking.

**Presidential makeover**

CPG’s 112-room property President Hotel is currently undergoing a refurbishment, featuring a fresh and modern design in guest rooms and bathrooms. Located in a prime city-centre location, the hotel offers easy access to key business hubs and amenities.

**Waka Pacific Climb gears up for opening**

The Waka Pacific Trust is set to open a new Wero Climb attraction adjacent to the Due Drop Events Centre and existing waterpark in May 2025.



Grand Millennium Auckland Atrium Bar



# Day Delegate Package

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**\$80** per person, per day

*Minimum numbers of 30 people apply*

**Main Venue Included.**

**Charges apply for additional breakout spaces.**

*Venue allocation is based on your advised numbers and setup preferences. A larger or specifically requested venue may incur an additional hire fee.*

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*Morning and Afternoon Tea items are Chef's Choice. Select sweet or savoury; upgrades & specific items may incur an additional fee..*

*Lunch is a Chef's Choice buffet, served outside your conference room or in Wellingtons Restaurant based on event size and availability. Specific restaurant requests may incur an additional charge.*

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- Iced water - *replenished each break*
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*We offer a range of AV equipment through Auckland Conventions, available at an additional charge. Estimates provided on request.*



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Eden Park, Coldplay concert 2024



Designed in consultation with local Tainui iwi, the 16-metre-high climb is made up of 78 climbing elements. Waka Pacific Climb will also incorporate symbols of Te Ao Māori such as the Tainui Waka and Maui who slowed the sun.

David Comery, CEO of the centre's owning trust, says the facility will provide new options to corporate groups and organisers of other business events who are looking for a fresh team building activity.

He says there has been a considerable resurgence of interest and activity from the events sector.

"Surprisingly, the phones kept ringing right up to the Christmas holidays and were back doing so at the end of the stats. Obviously, this is good news and indicates a positive shift as the economy appears to have stabilised," he adds,

Comery outlines several key factors

influencing the market. "Negative news tends to spread quickly, often overshadowing a public desire for optimism. The new year has sparked a reassessment, prompting action in the meetings market that has been stagnant."

He anticipates that 2025 will outperform 2024, particularly with significant changes in Auckland's events landscape.

"Notably, Eden Park will be allowed to host double the concerts previously permitted, a change facilitated by CEO Nick Sautner, which will enhance tourism and local businesses," he says. "Additionally, the opening of the New Zealand International Convention Centre is expected to attract large-scale international gatherings, bolstering Auckland's reputation."

Comery also recognises the resilience of forward-looking hotel developers, anticipating improved yields in 2025

following tough times.

He says Due Drop Events Centre and Waka Pacific Trust remains committed to enhancing community engagement, investing over \$1.6 million last year in programs benefiting more than 117,000 children.

Wero Climb will serve families and community groups, offering 15,000 free admissions to youth in South Auckland. He says over 10,000 registrations have already been received, showcasing strong demand for such initiatives.

**New owners for Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre**

Prime Property Group (PPG), a 100% New Zealand-owned and operated company, has acquired the Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, which is set on 6.26 acres of landscaped parkland overlooking the Panmure Basin. The property offers



Wero Climb impression

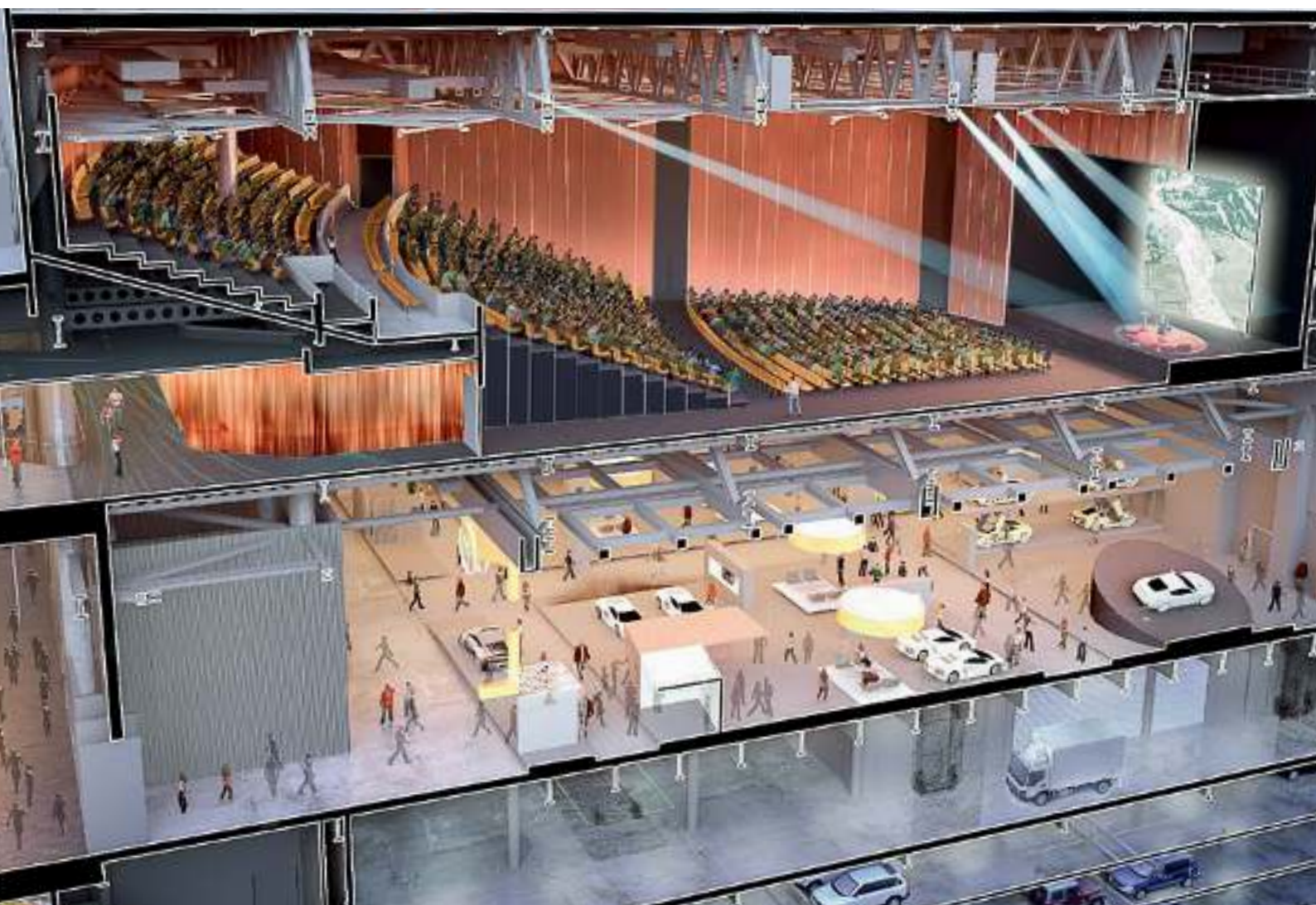


Events are a key focus for Auckland



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the building

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Theatre seats

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sqm of exhibition hall  
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3,200 people



unobstructed views of the water and includes 148 hotel rooms, 17 conference rooms, and a 400-seat theatre, making it one of Auckland’s largest and most comprehensive venues for business events. Additional amenities include a pool, gym, restaurant and bar, 24-hour room service and ample parking.

"With some of the best conferencing facilities in Auckland and in-house event experts at our disposal, we truly believe that the Waipuna conference experience is one that can bring your teams, your brands and your business together to create a memorable and successful event," says Nicolas Caffardo, manager for Prime Hotels.

"We are thrilled to add Waipuna to our portfolio. This venue offers a mix of high-quality service, a resort-like setting, and comprehensive facilities. Waipuna will be our ninth hotel, and we’re excited to enhance its offerings for our diverse customer base."

PPG brings over 30 years of expertise in hotels, restaurants, and commercial real estate. The group is known for its focus on long-term growth, sustainability, and operational excellence.

"We’re committed to maintaining Waipuna’s reputation for excellence, which



Waipuna Entrance

was recently recognised with the 2degrees Auckland Business Award for Excellence in Customer Service Delivery," Caffardo says. "Our team will work closely with the staff at Waipuna to continue exceeding customer expectations."

While Prime Property Group works on continuous improvements, it’s business as usual where guests can expect seamless operations, with upcoming enhancements

to systems and technology designed to elevate the overall guest experience.

"We are excited to invite both returning and new customers to experience Waipuna’s exceptional service and state-of-the-art facilities," Caffardo says. "With our investment, we’re confident Waipuna will continue to be a top-tier venue for events, conferences and accommodation in Auckland."

## CASTAWAYS RESORT, MARSDEN HOTEL GROUP



The Hamilton & Waikato team at Castaways Resort with Hosts Swati and Sonja

Perched on the cliff tops of Karioitahi beach, a few minutes from the Waiuku township and spanning the Auckland and Waikato border, is the Marsden Hotel

Group-managed Castaways Resort.

Meeting and event spaces include the Cliff Top which is ideal for large groups of up to 120, with panoramic ocean views

and a cliff top lawn area perfect for team building activities or pre-dinner drinks. The separate glass enclosed deck is ideal for private dining, as a break out area, or a dance floor. The Tasman venue located at the highest point of the resort, is set among peaceful gardens adjoining Bersantai Day Spa and is suitable for groups of up to 25. For smaller meetings The Boardroom Villa, can seat up to ten and is close to restaurant and bar.

Swathi Kota, group director of sales at Marsden Hotel Group, recently showcased the property to the Hamilton and Waikato Tourism team.

"It was a pleasure showing the team everything our resort has to offer – from our comfortable accommodation and inviting restaurant to the relaxing Bersantai Day Spa and our three versatile meeting and event spaces. We were fortunate to have beautiful weather, allowing us to fully appreciate the stunning views from every corner of the resort," says Kota.

Accommodation options include studio units, two bedroom chalets and one, two or three bedroom villas, ideal for business groups and residential events.



# EVERY VALUABLE MOMENT

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**Conference Rooms:** 4  
**Conference Capacity:** from 18 to 200

## SUDIMA KAIKŌURA 114 Esplanade, Corner of Esplanade and Yarmouth Street, Kaikōura



**Guest Rooms:** 120  
**Conference Rooms:** 1 to 2  
**Conference Capacity:** from 22 to 130

## SUDIMA CHRISTCHURCH CITY

49 Salisbury Street, Christchurch



**Guest Rooms:** 86  
**Conference Rooms:** 2  
**Conference Capacity:** from 18 to 70

## SUDIMA CHRISTCHURCH AIRPORT

550 Memorial Ave, Christchurch



**Guest Rooms:** 246  
**Conference Rooms:** 7 to 9  
**Conference Capacity:** from 8 to 280

## SUDIMA QUEENSTOWN FIVE MILE

22 Grant Road, Frankton, Queenstown



**Guest Rooms:** 120  
**Conference Rooms:** 3 to 4  
**Conference Capacity:** from 12 to 150

Sudima Auckland City



# Q&A WITH A BUSINESS EVENTS PROFESSIONAL

Meeting Newz gets to know Xanthe Smythe, sales manager – conference and business groups at Hind Management.

**Tell us about your role at Hind Management – what are your key responsibilities?**

*Xanthe:*

I joined Hind Management, which owns and operates Sudima Hotels and manages the Novotel Christchurch Airport, in July 2023 in the newly created role of sales manager for conference and business groups. My role encompasses all seven Sudima Hotels, and I also assist in promoting Novotel Christchurch Airport.

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Building, nurturing, and strengthening relationships with conference and business event clients.
- Managing clients who utilise our hotels for meetings and conferences, both with and without accommodation.
- Supporting clients who organise large-scale business events at external venues such as the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC), Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre, and

the Energy Events Centre in Rotorua, by securing large accommodation blocks for delegates.

**What are you hoping to achieve in 2025?**

*Xanthe:*

In 2025, my primary goal is to enhance the profile of Hind Hotels within the business events industry, positioning us as a trusted accommodation and hospitality partner that truly understands and caters



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to the unique needs of conference and event clients.

**What is your background in events?**

*Xanthe:*

I bring a diverse background in hospitality, events and sales, including five years working on super yachts. My experience spans corporate and social events, national educational tours, and venue sales with a focus on the corporate market. Prior to joining Hind Management, I worked with TableHub, an AV event solutions provider, where I collaborated closely with event managers, corporate clients, PCOs and associations. This breadth of experience has provided me with a strong foundation in understanding client needs across various event formats.

**How does your experience help you assist customers in organising business events?**

*Xanthe:*

My experience has given me a comprehensive understanding of the decision-making processes involved in event planning, which vary significantly between clients. Some clients have the autonomy to make decisions on the spot,

while others, particularly those working with committees, require additional time and input from multiple stakeholders. As a hotel, it is important to understand these requirements and the need for flexibility in our requirements at times.

I also recognise that within a single event, attendees can have a wide range of budgets and requirements. This awareness allows me to provide tailored solutions that accommodate different needs while ensuring a seamless event experience.

**You've recently completed the ICCA qualification. Can you tell us a bit about that and how it will help you in your role?**

*Xanthe:*

Completing the ICCA CICE (Certified International Convention Executive) certification was an invaluable experience, and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity.

The programme provided me with a broader understanding of how the business events ecosystem functions, from associations and PCOs to convention bureaus, convention centres, and destination management companies. Gaining insights into how cities determine which international conferences



Xanthe Smythe,  
Hind Management

to bid for has been particularly beneficial, as it enables me to better support clients navigating the bidding and planning process.

**Have you any other information you'd like to share?**

*Xanthe:*

I genuinely love my job and the business events industry. It is a highly relationship-driven sector, filled with problem solvers and action-oriented professionals. Our collective focus is always on achieving the best outcomes for clients, and as a result, industry colleagues and clients often become long-term connections and even friends. And you can never have too many of those!

Some meeting venues, have better views than others...

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# CATCHING UP WITH AUCKLAND CONVENTIONS, VENUES & EVENTS

**Richard Dodds, Head of conventions, discusses the state of Auckland's business events scene.**



**Q: What interest are you seeing for business events at present and what activity do you have planned for 2025?**

*Richard:*

Our customers are saying they are taking a cautious but optimistic approach; however, many are seeing green shoots particularly towards the second half of the year. With an increased visibility of Auckland as a business events destination with new competition arriving into the market, there will be strong growth in our sector.

We were receiving a lot of “we can't be seen to be spending money on events” explanations last year but with the requirement by corporates to continue to recognise and reward employees, we are seeing strong interest across our venues for banquet and conference business. This year's MEETINGS exhibition (in Auckland) supported by industry and BEIA will have a positive impact on the destination.

With a collection of 13 venues across our portfolio, Auckland Conventions, Venues and Events (ACVE) has something for everyone. We are fortunate to have been awarded the exclusive rights to sell MOTAT Aviation Hall and are seeing good interest in this venue.

We were early adopters in joining the New Zealand Society of Association Executives. We've started the year well with Auckland and Wellington launches and are seeing an encouraging number of new members and partners.

ACVE has high ambitions when it comes to supporting business events in Auckland – we understand the impact that business events can have on a destination. While the team work across a crowded calendar with different user groups including major events, Auckland Live and conventions, all teams are intent on driving strong economic growth, increased venue utilisation, and social vibrancy for Auckland. There is no better destination!

**Q: What is your message to the market?**

*Richard:*

After working extensively overseas I see one of the biggest assets for our industry being our deliberate intent to collaborate. While there is competition, there is an enduring philosophy across our sector to do the right thing by clients, to collaborate our way out of challenges and to attract the good and do the best by our clients and partners.

Kiwis are known across the world for manaakitanga, inspiring the New Zealand visitor experience. This is such a unique selling point for our industry.

**Q: What highlights or developments have there been over the last year – what stands out?**

*Richard:*

We are incredibly proud of the team, in being able to get across the difficult macro-economic challenges, to become agile

Richard Dodds, Auckland Conventions, Venues & Events

around how we sell respective venues and continue to attract and retain business. Standouts for the year have been the strong relationships we have built with our key clients and partners and the work we have done to understand how we can stand-out in an increasing competitive environment. What I love about this business is that we start each day with a day one philosophy with all those hopes, goals and dreams about what we can do to impact our business.

**Q: Tell us about some of venues and what makes them special.**

*Richard:*

Within our team we talk a lot about our core venues Aotea Centre, Viaduct Events Centre and Shed 10, venues in which we deliver around 90% of the 380 events we hold annually.

We are also proud of the work the sales team are doing across some of our smaller and more unique venues like Auckland Art Gallery and Auckland Zoo. As part of our portfolio, we have venues that sit on the Waitematā Harbour, the Viaduct Events Centre, the Aotea Centre which is the home of performing arts in New Zealand and Shed 10 – a century-old cargo shed full of character and historical significance. We love the addition of MOTAT Aviation Hall to our portfolio as it is another venue that we can tell a great story about.



SCENIC HOTEL GROUP AUCKLAND – UPDATES

**Location, versatility at Heartland Hotel Auckland Airport**

Located just three kilometres from Auckland Airport in the heart of the Airpark Business Centre, Heartland Hotel Auckland Airport is a convenient choice for business stays, meetings and conferences.

Following a modern refurbishment, the 141-room, four-star hotel now offers upgraded guest rooms featuring enhanced workspaces designed for comfort and productivity.

“Our guests are loving the refurbishment, and our loyal customers appreciate that we listened to their feedback,” says Adele Livett, area general manager Heartland Hotel Auckland Airport. “They’re especially enjoying the open layout and desk space, improved lighting, and convenient desk-level charging stations for all devices.

“With two versatile function rooms, high-speed wifi and modern AV technology, the hotel provides a seamless event experience. The onsite restaurant and bar offer catering options, while the complimentary airport shuttle adds extra convenience and easy access for guests.” she says.

Whether hosting a conference or staying

before a flight, guests will appreciate the hotel’s refreshed facilities and welcoming atmosphere.

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**A business traveller's delight - Legacy Airedale Hotel Auckland**

Located in the heart of Auckland’s CBD, Legacy Airedale Hotel Auckland offers the ideal accommodation for business event attendees. Positioned on Queen Street, this sophisticated boutique hotel is just a short walk from Aotea Centre, Auckland Town Hall, and the soon to be open New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC), making it a prime choice for professionals seeking convenience, comfort and style.

The hotel blends contemporary elegance with historic charm,” says Stacey McGregor, hotel manager. “Spacious suites are equipped with work-friendly amenities, high-speed wifi and plush bedding – perfect for unwinding after a day of meetings



Heartland Hotel Auckland Airport

or networking. Our onsite Trocadero Restaurant & Bar offers a relaxed yet refined dining experience, ideal for informal business discussions or after-hours relaxation.”

With easy access to Auckland’s corporate offices and entertainment districts, Legacy Airedale Hotel Auckland ensures a seamless stay for business travellers. Whether attending a major conference, hosting meetings, or simply needing a central base, this hotel delivers a premium experience that balances productivity with indulgence.

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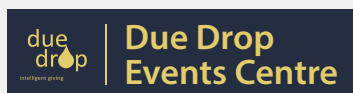


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- Meeting rooms can accommodate between 120-150 people in a theatre-style and can be divided into three smaller rooms. The boardroom, which can host up to 20 guests, features floor-to-ceiling windows that flood the space with natural light.

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## New hotel officially opens in Auckland

Hotel Grand Chancellor Auckland held its official opening late last year with travel and tourism partners amongst the guests along with other business partners and those involved in the build of the property.



Janet Neesham, Pure Pacific DMC; Kerry Lahood, Southern Discoveries; Glen Bailey, Tātaki Auckland; Therese Von Dinklage, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise; Yamile Hernandez, Tātaki Auckland



Brendan Drury, Orbit World Travel, with Kylie Manuel and Nicola Perkins, both TVNZ



Brooke Miller, Conference Innovators; Danelle Ayers, Studio Moda; Emma Prattley, Conference Innovators

## Rock n Roll at the Bowl

The iconic stage at the Bowl of Brooklands was the gala dinner venue for the BEIA annual conference in New Plymouth in December. Industry members gathered and dressed to the theme of rock and roll icons.



Warren Harvey, Energy Event Centre; Tracey Thomas, Conference Innovators; Shelley Cunningham, CD Event Management; Doug Camo, MC



Louise Toulmin, Destination Great Lake Taupo; Melissa Devine, Venture Taranaki; Angela Werder, Tourism Bay of Plenty



Tania Wakefield, Due Drop Events Centre; Shelley Trutsch, Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre



Tiffany Searle, Quest Apartment Hotels; Ken Pereira, Auckland Convention Bureau; JR Robertson, The Production Agency

## Friends of Waipuna celebrate 55 years of memories

Invited guests gathered at Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre to farewell an incredible era with Mt Wellington Trust as owners. Canapes and cocktails and a speech from the hotel general manager Daron Gray celebrated memories and achievements over the last 55 years.



Daron Gray, Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre; Tania Wakefield, Due Drop Events Centre



David Comery, Due Drop Events Centre; Brett Tucker, Heritage Horticulture



Shakira Rahman, Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre; Angelique van der Merwe, Colab Connects



Mohamed Mansour, Bruce Pulman Park; Parker Joyce, ex Mt Wellington Licensing Trust

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## A Summer to Remember – But Challenges Remain!

Wow—what a summer it’s been for events in Aotearoa! From the adrenaline of SailGP to the festival vibes of Rhythm & Vines and the sheer grit of Ironman New Zealand, it’s been an incredible few months. A huge shoutout to our NZEA members who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes, creating unforgettable moments for thousands.

Of course, it hasn’t all been smooth sailing. Special licences continue to be a thorn in the side of many event organisers, with inconsistent rulings causing unnecessary headaches. NZEA is tackling this head-on, working alongside EVANZ and the Promoters Association to push for change at the central government level.

Speaking of government, how good was it to hear Prime Minister Christopher Luxon declare, “we need more concerts”? We couldn’t agree more! But as we all know, events don’t just magically happen.

They need sustainable funding, a skilled workforce, the right infrastructure, and fewer regulatory roadblocks. NZEA will continue working to educate ministers on what’s really needed to grow and support our industry.

On a positive note, we’ve just announced our inaugural Sustainable Event Suppliers – a group of businesses leading the way in creating greener, more responsible events. Check them out at [www.sustainableevents.co.nz](http://www.sustainableevents.co.nz).

We’ve also launched our new Virtual Insights Groups, where event pros can connect and deep-dive into specialised areas like operations, sporting events, marketing, and more. Keen to join the conversation? Head to [www.nzea.co/events](http://www.nzea.co/events).

That’s it from me. Please reach out if you have any queries.

Elaine Linnell, GM, NZEA



By Elaine Linnell  
general manager  
New Zealand Events  
Association (NZEA)

### PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

#### Paige Hallam

has joined the Auckland Conventions, Venues and Events team as the new marketing manager. Hallam previously worked at Infrastructure New Zealand and most recently spent a year in London working with one of the UK’s largest trade shows in the HVAC industry.



#### Samantha Friar

has been appointed as the new director of sales at Pullman Auckland. She joined Pullman after more than seven years at Cordis Auckland, having been director of catering and event sales for the last 2.5 years. Prior to the Cordis, Friar was the assistant operations manager at Montana Catering.



#### Amelia Lowe

has started with Event Dynamics as event manager. Lowe was previously with Corporate Travel Management for a couple of years as event manager and the University of Auckland as a senior conference and events planner.



#### Loving Parima

is the new meeting and events sales manager at Pullman Auckland. For the past three years, she was catering and event sales manager at Cordis Auckland. Prior to Cordis, Parima held a variety of positions over nine years across Pullman Auckland and Novotel/Ibis Ellerslie, Auckland.



#### Pulkit Veer

is the new key account manager – meetings & events, pacific for Accor. Veer spent the past six years with QT Hotels & Resorts, most recently as director of sales at QT Auckland. Prior to that he held sales roles with Pullman Auckland, Marriott International, and The Ritz-Carlton.



#### Leigh Higgins

has been promoted to group director of sales at Hind Management/Sudima Hotels. Previously Higgins was director of corporate sales and in March this year will celebrate 14 years with the company.



# RAISING THE BAR AND THE PROFILE

**Getting key business events organisers into the destination and showcasing the region's many attributes is continuing to pay dividends for Hawke's Bay.**



Marine Parade viewing platform

Hamish Saxton, CEO Hawke's Bay Tourism, says the focus on families is certainly reaping benefits and it is a strategy that will continue in 2025.

"We have hosted multiple association event managers in our region over the last 12 months which have converted into conference wins for our region. These connections have come from referrals, sales calls and attending trade shows," says Saxton.

"We will be hosting five event managers from Auckland to our region in March that will coincide with The Grand Long Lunch at F.A.W.C. As well as attending this lunch, the participants will be exploring the region with us for three days, so this is a great opportunity to really profile the finest aspects of Hawke's Bay.

"With award-winning food and wine, outstanding art deco architecture, warm balmy days and magnificent landscapes,

Hawke's Bay provides the perfect location to deliver a truly memorable business event," Saxton adds.

"Hawke's Bay is easily accessible via several daily direct flights from Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, and offers a broad range of accommodation options including hotels, motels and apartments. There are also luxury lodges, self-contained boutique properties, and bed and breakfasts nestled within stunning locations across



# Hawke's Bay – the main course for your next business event



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Toitoti Assembly Ballroom



Toitoti Opera House

the region. Facilities range from intimate meeting spaces to large custom-built conference venues either overlooking the Pacific Ocean or steeped in art deco history. There is a great selection on offer to suit any event size and taste.”

He points out that with fertile soils and a warm temperate climate, Hawke’s Bay is one of New Zealand’s oldest wine-growing regions and the newest Great Wine Capital of the World – a legacy that can be woven into all business events by an unbeatable stable of passionate catering operators.

**Encouraging signs**

Toitoti – Hawke’s Bay Arts & Event Centre in Hastings reports seeing an encouraging mixture of short and long lead enquiries and an increased volume of enquiry overall.

Coltan Wright, business manager, arts and culture for the venue feels that longer lead times Toitoti is experiencing are an indication of confidence in the industry and the result of a more stable environment post covid and, in a Hawke’s Bay context, post cyclone.

“We are encouraging people not to delay reaching out to their venue partners and suppliers – do it as soon as possible. It’s never too early to make contact,” says Wright.

He adds that adverse conditions over the past few years have made the venue and region stronger in many ways.

“Budget pressures and other challenges have forced us to look at our client mix through a different lens which has actually been a real blessing. Understanding that the relationships we’ve built with community based organisations are creating opportunities for commercial growth has been incredibly satisfying. Maintaining a diverse client mix is one of the best ways we can spread risk across our portfolio of clients and is a focus moving forward.

“Toitoti offers everything from fully formed conference facilities to state of the art performance, entertainment venues and technology. With one of the best caterers in the country based on site (Dish Catering), our own team of professional technicians, modern equipment and inhouse

coordination and delivery support – Toitoti is the complete package.”

**2024 highlights stand out for Toitoti**

“The Toitū te reo festival in August was a two-day festival celebrating language, culture and Maori identity wrapped around the seventh annual Toitū te reo Symposium. This attracted 7000 attendees and included the most amazing creamed paua dumplings you’ll ever taste.

“We also hosted the Jaguar Land Rover Retail Awards, which celebrated the outstanding contributions and achievements of Jaguar Land Rover’s retailers and showcased the brand’s commitment to excellence. It was a pleasure working with the Events Direct team on this.”

Wright also points to the The Australasian Airport Roundtable as a standout event. “This is the industry’s must-attend small conference for airport air service development and marketing professionals and an incredible marketing opportunity for our Hawke’s Bay.”



Tuki River



Art Deco Trust Tours



# toittoi

Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre



## Host your next event at Toittoi – Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre

Looking for the perfect venue for your next business event? Toittoi – Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre is more than just an iconic Opera House. With a variety of versatile spaces, we're equipped to host events of all sizes, from intimate conferences of 20-50 people to larger gatherings that make an impact.

Whether you're planning a board meeting, corporate seminar, or multi-day conference, Toittoi offers a blend of historic charm and modern functionality. Our dedicated in-house events team is here to ensure your event runs smoothly, with personalized support at every step. From technical expertise delivered by our in-house technical crew to catering options that delight every palate, we take care of the details so you can focus on what matters most.

Located in the heart of Hastings, Toittoi offers world-class facilities in a central, accessible location. Whatever the occasion, let us help you create an unforgettable experience that exceeds your expectations.



Contact: Coltan Wright 027 203 4823 | [Coltanw@toittoivenues.co.nz](mailto:Coltanw@toittoivenues.co.nz)  
[toittoivenues.co.nz](http://toittoivenues.co.nz)







EV Chargers at Scenic Te Pania Napier

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION AT SCENIC HOTEL TE PANIA

Ideally located on Marine Parade opposite the Napier War Memorial Conference Centre, Scenic Hotel Te Pania, Napier provides a stunning waterfront setting for conferences, corporate events and business meetings.

Superb food, wine, (the Hawkes Bay was recently named the 12th Great Wine Capital

of the World) and local activities are right at the doorstep.

Enhancing the hotel's corporate offerings is its carbon-neutral room rates, supporting Forever Forests projects, and two new 7kW EV chargers, reinforcing Scenic Hotel Groups commitment to sustainability.



Scenic Hotel, Te Pania

Scenic Hotel Te Pania ensures a seamless experience, with tailored inhouse catering for everything from board meetings to large corporate gatherings. With the convenience of onsite EV chargers, guests and delegates can recharge their EVs with ease, making business travel more sustainable, aligning with the hotel's broader environmental initiatives.

For a green-conscious, professional accommodation and event space, Scenic Hotel Te Pania offers sustainability, comfort and functionality in a remarkable setting.

### For more details

visit [www.scenichotelgroup.co.nz/scenic-hotel-te-pania/](http://www.scenichotelgroup.co.nz/scenic-hotel-te-pania/) or contact: Scenic Hotel Te Pania T: 06 833 7733 | E [tepania@scenichotels.co.nz](mailto:tepania@scenichotels.co.nz)



Napier Aquarium event space

## OCEAN FOCUS AT NATIONAL AQUARIUM

For organisers seeking activities with impact, the National Aquarium of New Zealand's ocean-centred environmental sessions are a compelling choice.

"Delegates participate in a one-hour programme led by marine experts, gaining insight into marine life and conservation efforts," says Abby Davies, operations manager. "The experience concludes with a beach cleanup, allowing attendees to contribute directly to preserving the local environment – a meaningful way to add value beyond the conference."

Davies points out that this is just one of the many options provided by the National Aquarium, which is also a venue in its own right.

"When planning a conference in Hawke's Bay, finding a venue that offers more than just a room can elevate the entire experience. The National Aquarium of New Zealand presents a distinctive option that combines striking surroundings with engaging activities, setting the stage for memorable moments.

"With its underwater tunnel and sweeping

sea views, the aquarium provides a backdrop for everything from conference and yoga sessions, to networking events. Its versatile spaces accommodate both small and large groups, offering a refreshing alternative to traditional venues."

Davies says activity planning is also made easy with a range of options to suit different interests.

"Guided tours featuring native species like kiwi, little penguins and tuatara offer an engaging look at New Zealand's wildlife, while interactive feeding opportunities add a hands-on element. Whether for delegate downtime, partner programmes, or VIP experiences, the aquarium's offerings can be tailored to fit any agenda.

"Welcome receptions to farewell functions, the National Aquarium of New Zealand provides a fresh, dynamic setting that ensures any event stands out," she adds.



Little penguin encounter





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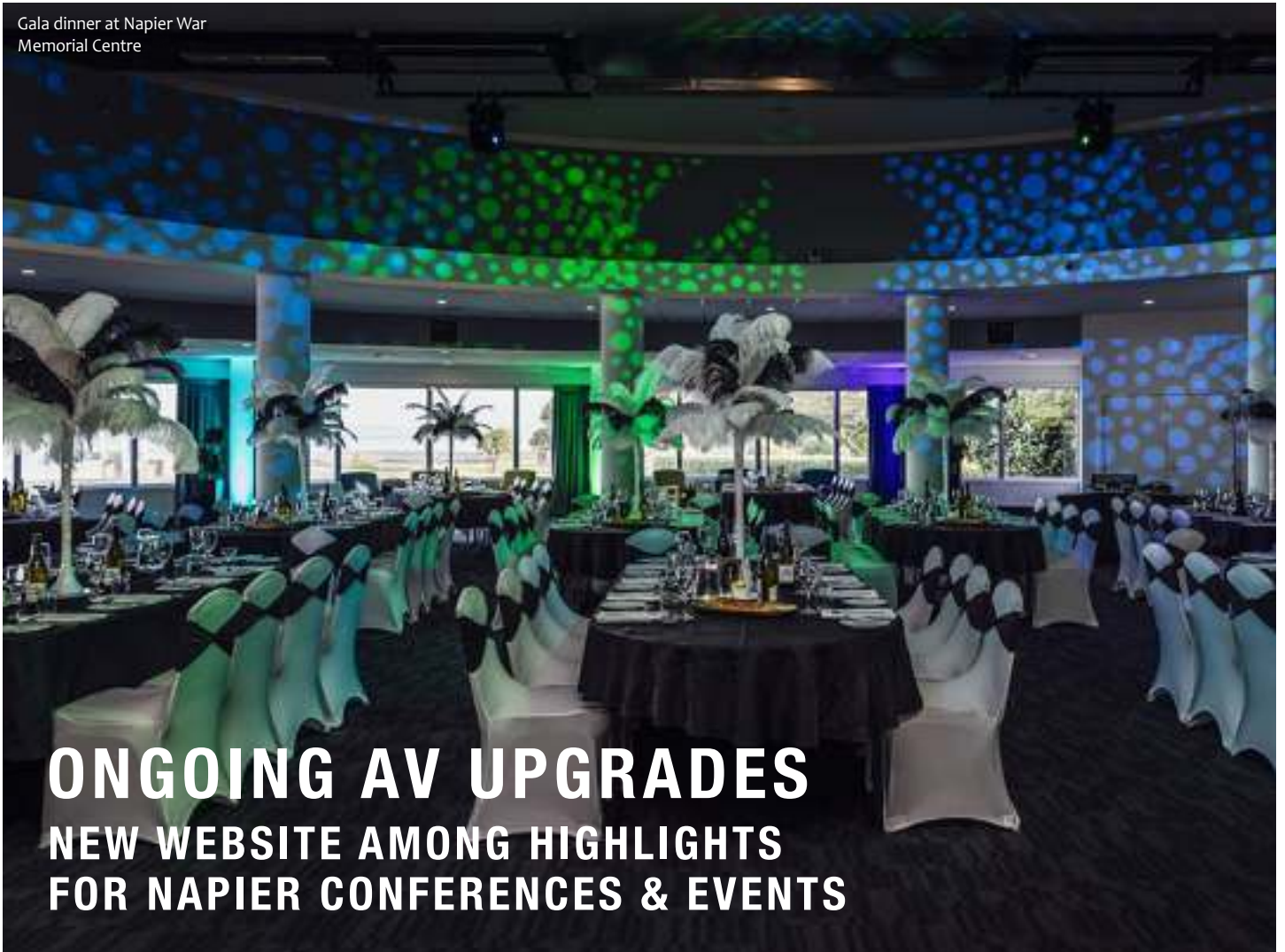
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**NAPIER**  
conferences & events

Gala dinner at Napier War Memorial Centre



## ONGOING AV UPGRADES NEW WEBSITE AMONG HIGHLIGHTS FOR NAPIER CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Napier Conferences & Events has a robust calendar of bookings already in place and the team is gearing up to host several high-profile, multi-day events that promise to make a significant impact.

Hayden Henderson, manager of Napier Conferences & Events, says demand for multi-day conferences has seen a notable rise, with both short-lead and long-lead enquiries increasing.

“A highlight for 2025 will be the launch of our new website, focusing on the customer journey. This platform will not only showcase Napier’s charm but also reflect the character and dedication of the Napier Conferences & Events team,” adds Henderson.

Complementing this is the development of a strong delegate activity programme, leveraging local partnerships to provide memorable experiences for conference attendees. Additionally, the team is collaborating with local organisations to introduce a Corporate Social Responsibility offering, allowing events to contribute positively to the community.

The AV team is continuing to upgrade

audio-visual and lighting systems across the venue. In the pipeline are ceiling-mounted, motorised screens in the Natusch Ballroom enabling faster set up, easier control and a larger footprint on the stage. There are plans to add to the lighting equipment and

software to expand the offering in this area. Scheduled upgrades to the Zoom Room venue spaces will see more AV controls to handle additional sound, audio and peripheral equipment.

Henderson says the team saw a number



Napier Conferences & Events catering



of highlights in 2024.

“After originally booking their conference for 2020, Mastercraft Kitchens were then affected by both Covid and Cyclone Gabrielle. Initially looking at offshore options for 2024, they decided to stay in Hawke’s Bay to support the region’s recovery.

“The event was a resounding success, drawing numerous attendees and featuring engaging activities that showcased the best of Napier.”

### Significant upgrades

Last year also saw significant upgrades to the venue’s technical infrastructure.

Four venue spaces were installed with, and certified as fully functional, Zoom Rooms, networked with multiple permanent PTZ AI tracking cameras, allowing video conferencing on both Zoom and Teams platforms.

Clients have the ability to host hybrid events, controlling much of the streaming themselves with user friendly software and onsite support. In addition, the equipment allows the technicians to run the whole operation on behalf of the client.

The sound system speakers were upgraded in the two largest venue spaces,



Napier War Memorial Centre

while fixed and portable lighting effects were improved.

### Local relationships

Henderson points out that Napier’s success as a conference destination is built on collaborative relationships with local businesses and venues.

“Partnerships with various Hawke’s Bay

establishments along with Napier City Council venues such as the National Aquarium and Municipal Theatre, have enriched the offerings for clients, creating unforgettable experiences that set Napier apart.

“With a focus on innovation, partnership, and community impact, Napier Conferences & Events continues to solidify its reputation as the ultimate business events partner.”

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# PCOA BRISBANE 2024:

Audience participation  
at one of the many  
educational sessions



By Terry Holt

## A GAME-CHANGER FOR THE BUSINESS EVENTS INDUSTRY

**Brisbane took centre stage in December 2024 as The Star Brisbane played host to the Professional Conference Organisers Association (PCOA) annual conference. Delegates from across Australia and New Zealand gathered to exchange ideas, gain insights, and forge new connections, solidifying Brisbane’s reputation as a premier destination for world-class events.**

Over three action-packed days, attendees experienced a dynamic mix of keynote presentations, workshops and networking sessions. The programme delivered an impressive lineup of speakers, including thought leaders and industry pioneers who challenged delegates to rethink their approaches and embrace innovation in a rapidly evolving industry.

Lauren Parsons CSP, one of the keynote speakers, left attendees inspired with her insights into well-being and productivity, sparking meaningful conversations that carried on throughout the event.

Reflecting on the success of the conference, PCOA president, Barry Neame says, “Attendee feedback was consistent with the likes of: ‘Fantastic event – one of the best I have ever been to.’ ‘A lot of thought and organisation went into this event – every detail was considered.’ ‘The experience and care put into organising the conference was not lost on me.’

“When considering the time and financial investment of attending PCOA, I can genuinely rate PCOA24 as excellent. On the morning of day two, I messaged colleagues to say we need to send more delegates next year, such was the level of value I felt, even prior to any post event activity.”

“Brisbane truly lived up to its reputation as a vibrant, innovative city,” Neame says.



Lauren Parsons – Keynote speaker

“The Star Brisbane provided an exceptional venue that catered seamlessly to the needs of our delegates, and the energy throughout the event was a testament to the city’s ability to host world-class gatherings. PCOA24 has set a new benchmark for our industry.”

The Star Brisbane itself received praise from delegates for its cutting-edge facilities, flawless event delivery, and its ability to integrate luxury with practicality. Attendees were particularly impressed by the venue’s commitment to the seamless flow of sessions within its meeting spaces.

Howard Smith Wharves, Brisbane’s iconic riverside hub, provided the perfect setting for PCOA24’s networking event. Against a backdrop of the Story Bridge and Brisbane River, attendees connected over great food and drinks, solidifying relationships and creating opportunities for future collaborations.

The conference’s impact was amplified



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The trade expo area at PCOA 2024

across social media channels, with attendees sharing key takeaways, standout moments and behind-the-scenes glimpses. Posts celebrating the host city, venue and the vibrant energy of PCOA24 showcased just how impactful the event was.

Brisbane Economic Development Agency’s (BEDA’s) general manager, tourism, business and major events, Lorelle Chittick says hosting the Professional Conference Organisers Association (PCOA) Conference in Brisbane was an exciting opportunity for the city.

“It’s not every day you get to host a conference for the very people who design and deliver business events, and we were proud to show them why Brisbane is a top choice,” says Chittick.

“Brisbane is a modern, connected, and sustainable global city. The conference allowed us to showcase our world-class venues, exceptional operational capabilities and vibrant lifestyle, all while fostering lasting partnerships.

“A highlight was the dynamic networking session hosted by BEDA at the iconic riverside location of Howard Smith Wharves, where delegates connected and collaborated, further solidifying Brisbane’s credentials as a leading destination for business events.

“We look forward to welcoming our professional conference organiser colleagues back to Brisbane for future events and collaboration.”



Entegy were the tech solutions partner for PCOA 2024

## COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR – THE EVENT, THE VENUE AND THE HOST CITY

This year’s event was the first time for PCO Drew Matheson, GM of Conference and Events Limited.

“Overall, I found the event to be extremely valuable in for my professional development. It was a chance to meet fellow PCO leaders to discuss industry challenges and exchange solutions. While such conversations naturally occur at various industry events, the PCOA Council and 2024 programme committee deserve credit for deliberately creating this dedicated forum, which clearly met a strong demand.

“The Star Brisbane complex is amazing. Seeing Brisbane from the river at night was another highlight.”

Vanessa Wallace, business events manager, Rotorua enjoyed the opportunity to connect with PCOs and industry leaders, foster relationships and gain insights into current trends.

“It was a chance to explore partnership opportunities, fresh ideas and strategies to how to best promote Rotorua as a destination for business events and to network with key decision makers and industry peers.”

Wallace says Brisbane offered a vibrant setting for PCOA, the main plenary was well-executed, with varied seating configurations that worked effectively.

The PCOA is now looking forward to the PCOA25 conference in New Zealand, which will take place from 7–9 December at the Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre.



Talking business events



Team New Zealand



## By Lisa Hopkins

chief executive  
Business Events Industry  
Aotearoa (BEIA)



The start of a new year has brought changes to leadership, signalling a fresh approach to how we work with Government. While Minister Doocey's unexpected departure from the tourism and hospitality portfolio marks a shift, I am optimistic about Minister Upston stepping into this role. Her early experience in corporate event planning is particularly promising for our sector.

Additionally, I am encouraged by the Prime Minister's appointment of Nicola Willis as Minister for Economic Growth – a portfolio where our sector truly thrives, making a significant contribution and serving as a catalyst for broader development. I look forward to engaging with both ministers in the near future.

So, what can we expect out of 2025? Recently, the landscape has been shaped by economic pressures and reductions in government spending. Despite these headwinds, the sector's resilience has been undeniable, and conversations are becoming more upbeat. Optimism is the prevailing sentiment – a necessary driver for turning

resilience into meaningful progress.

For the Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) team, we are looking at 2025 as a year of progression, guided by the principles of Piata Mai, New Zealand's Business Events Strategic Direction, which also drives BEIA's own strategy. Launched nearly a year ago, Piata Mai remains the blueprint for the business events sector to deliver on its full potential over the next 10 years.

### Restoring domestic confidence

Restoring confidence in the domestic market is not only critical for maintaining year-round activity, it plays a pivotal role in supporting regional New Zealand. While this is often tied to business sentiment of the day, domestic business has never been more imperative as regions continue to see investment into this sector through infrastructure and people. We are so lucky in New Zealand to be spoilt for choice when it comes to destinations, it makes rotating a business event very easy to do. This results in delivering consistent economic benefits which not only supports the community and people of that region, but the country as a whole.

### Competing internationally

On the global stage, New Zealand's business events sector faces intense competition. Securing international conferences, trade shows, and incentives is a strategic process – one that requires robust support and deliberate positioning. Hosting an event in New Zealand is never a casual decision; it is a purposeful choice that reflects our ability to deliver world-class experiences with meaningful outcomes.

Therefore, it is imperative that we take bold steps to level the playing field, and we congratulate Tourism New Zealand for the work they have done with the Conference Assistance Programme (CAP). This lays the foundation for subvention support, but scaling this programme is essential. Expanding CAP will not only help New Zealand remain competitive but also address a practical point... being the most beautiful country in the world will only take us so far. Having the right subvention leverage, in addition to a plethora of extremely well-regarded Kiwis, leaders in their field, an inclusive approach across the board and, of course, the right

infrastructure, will help take us the rest of the way in securing the all-important international business.

### Strengthening data and education

BEIA's 2025 strategy prioritises the development of foundational industry pillars – data and education. These elements are vital for ensuring the sector's long-term growth and sustainability. The Government's recent investment in a data programme to measure the industry's economic value is a crucial step forward. In partnership with Regional Tourism New Zealand, BEIA has already initiated the work to provide robust insights that will shape decision-making and tell the story of the sector's true impact.

Education is equally pivotal. BEIA's collaboration with Ringa Hora to establish a vocational education programme will equip the industry with the skills and talent needed to meet future demands. Together, these initiatives lay the groundwork for an informed, adaptable, and future-ready sector.

### Celebrating industry achievements

MEETINGS 2025 will be a standout event, returning to Auckland after four years. This flagship gathering will showcase why New Zealand's business events sector is so exceptional, bringing together buyers and industry professionals from across New Zealand and around the globe.

At the BEIA annual conference, which will also be held in Auckland in November, strategically aligning dates with the Business Events Expo, the business events industry will celebrate the exceptional contributions of individuals and organisations at the inaugural New Zealand Business Events Industry Awards.

The opening of the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) in 2025 will add to the excitement. This world-class venue marks a new chapter in the story of New Zealand's business events journey, and we can't wait to celebrate this milestone.

So welcome 2025, also the Year of the Snake, and what will be considered a pivotal year for business events. Enjoy the ride!

*Nga mihi nui,*  
**Lisa Hopkins**



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Karla Connor, DD Events  
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